

Libya denies U.S. slavery charge

CAIRO (AP) — Libya charges that the United States is trying to undermine Libya's good name by accusing it of receiving women and children abducted from southern Sudan as slaves. The official news agency JANA quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying he was "astonished and amazed" that Libya was implicated in such a report. "This false accusation against Libya wants to harm the reputation of the Great Janahira (Libya) and destroy its image in the world," the official said. The charge was in a document compiled by the U.S. embassy in Sudan and released in Washington. It accused forces of Sudan's fundamentalist government of routinely abducting women and children in the south and sending them to work as forced labour in farms inside Sudan or in neighbouring Libya. Reports of slavery have circulated for years as Sudan fought a 10-year-old civil war (Khartoum rejects summit, page 2). The U.S. diplomatic report was the first mention that southerners were exported as slaves to Libya. "The Libyan Arab people... who have promoted workers to become partners because workers no matter how well-paid will always remain slaves, strongly reject these false claims," the official said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورنال تايمز يومية مستقلة ناشرها مجلس الصحافة العربية الرأي

Riyadh refutes Libyan charges

RIYADH (AP) — Saudi Arabia Friday refuted Libyan claims that it was obstructing the flow of Libyan pilgrims to Islam's holiest shrines at Mecca and Medina. The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) quoted an unnamed official source as saying hundreds of Libyans already have arrived in the kingdom via third countries. The official source, which in Saudi Arabia is the equivalent of a government spokesman, said 5,520 Libyans have been granted visas for this year's Hajj rituals, which climax at the end of this month. The Libyan parliament Monday appealed to King Fahd to ignore the international sanctions imposed against the Tripoli government and let Libyans fly their country's aircraft to Mecca. Libya made similar appeals to other Muslim countries and to the 51-member Jeddah-based Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in a bid to wedge a crack in 13-month-old sanctions imposed against Tripoli. According to the Libyan news agency, the General People's Congress told King Fahd in a telegram Monday that "subjecting the holy places to political facilitations contradicts the wishes of God." Responding to the Libyan telegram, the Saudi source said the kingdom was not responsible for arranging the pilgrims' transportation to the kingdom.

Volume 17 Number 5307

AMMAN SATURDAY, MAY 15, 1993 THU EL QU'DEH 23, 1413

Price: Jordan 100 fils; Saudi Arabia 1.50 riyals; UAE 1.50 dirhams

Iraq drills oil well with 5,600 bpd output

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraqi engineers have drilled an oil well in the southern province of Najaf, yielding 5,600 barrels per day of crude, the official weekly, Alef Ba, reported Friday. "A fountain of black gold gushed out amid the golden sand of Najaf desert," the magazine said. "Iraqi explorers drilled three oil wells, one of them has a production capacity of 5,600 bpd," Alef Ba said. No other details were available. U.N. trade sanctions imposed soon after the 1990 Gulf crisis bar Iraqi exports including its lifeblood oil. But Iraq, with the world's second largest oil reserves after Saudi Arabia, is pressing ahead with exploration. Oil officials say they have launched a drilling and exploration campaign in areas untraced before. They say the main area is the desert stretching from the outskirts of Baghdad to Jordan in the west.

British MPs visit Shiite marshlands

BAGHDAD (R) — Two left-wing members of parliament (MPs) from Britain went on a fact-finding tour of the Shiite Muslim marshlands of southern Iraq Friday. The area is within the "no-fly" zone imposed last year by the United States, Britain and France with the declared aim of protecting Shiite dissidents from attack by Iraqi aircraft. George Galloway and Tam Dalyell, from the opposition Labour Party, arrived in Iraq Wednesday to explore the effect of U.N. trade sanctions and tour the southern marshes. The deputies, outspoken opponents of Britain's participation in the 1991 Gulf war to oust Iraq from Kuwait, are the first British MPs to visit government-controlled areas of Iraq since the conflict.

4 beheaded in Saudi Arabia

PIYADH (AP) — Four Pakistanis were beheaded Friday for smuggling drugs into Saudi Arabia, the Interior Ministry announced. The four were identified as Amin Al Rahman Bagh Mohammad, who was beheaded in Jeddah, and Abdul Qayoun Saeed Rahman, Ghulam Hussein Haji Khan and Nader Khan Shahzad who were beheaded in Riyadh. About 70 people have been executed for drug smuggling, most of them Pakistanis.

Teresa hospitalised with broken ribs

ROME (AP) — Mother Teresa, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her work with the poor and sick, has been hospitalised with three ribs after she tripped while going to chapel, her doctor said Friday. "She's well," said Dr. Vincenzo Bilotto, "but suffering great pain." The cardiologist and geriatrics specialist said he had visited his patient Friday morning in a Rome hospital. "She's been in the hospital since yesterday (Thursday) morning. She fell going to chapel," Mr. Bilotto said. She had been staying at a convent on the outskirts of Rome, one of the convents for her nuns which operate in 95 countries. "She tripped. You know those shoes, those sandals she wears," Dr. Bilotto added. "Given her conditions of health, it could be a serious thing," Dr. Bilotto added about the frail, 82-year-old nun.

N. Korea may have nuclear arms in 1994'

SEOUL (AP) — North Korea will be capable of developing two or three nuclear weapons as soon as next year if its nuclear weapons development programme is not halted, South Korea's intelligence agency has quoted as saying Friday. Yonhap news agency quoted the National Security Planning Agency (NSPA) as saying in a report to parliament that Pyongyang would be able to develop two or three nuclear bombs by 1994 or 1995 unless its nuclear development programme was stopped immediately. The report came two days after the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution urging Pyongyang to rescind its March 12 announcement it was pulling out of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to allow special inspections of two previously undeclared sites suspected of holding weapons-grade plutonium.

Jordan reports no progress in talks



Haidar Abdul Shafi, chief Palestinian delegate to Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, Thursday talks to the press in Washington as Syrian negotiator Mouaffak Al Alaf (right) looks on (AFP photo)

Progress was made, he said the crux of the Israeli-Syrian dispute remained unsolved.

Syria wants Israel to commit to full withdrawal from the Golan Heights in return for a peace agreement. Israel insists on first hearing what Syria means by full peace, before it will discuss what it means by withdrawal.

Israel appealed to the United States to help break the deadlock in its negotiations with Syria.

The Syrians have been demanding for some time that the United States, which has promised to play the role of "full partner" in the peace process, should intervene. But the Israelis resisted the idea.

However, Mr. Rabinovich, told a news conference on Thursday: "We feel comfortable with the role of the full partner and we would feel comfortable if the full partner enters the scene in order to try and move this negotiation forward."

Mr. Alaf of Syria told a news conference: "Israel has not

concerned that very important

equation, full withdrawal for full

peace. And I do not think there is

any possibility to establish peace

before an answer from the Israelis committing themselves to

that equation."

Mr. Rabinovich said: "The Syrian attempt to break this logjam open by introducing the formula of full peace for full withdrawal doesn't quite do the trick because, frankly, full peace is no

progress."

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Mujahedeen of Iran claim escalated raids

NICOSIA (AP) — The main Iranian opposition group claimed Friday that it has escalated its armed operations against the Tehran regime and said 200 Revolutionary Guards have been killed or wounded in clashes this month.

The Mujahedeen-e-Khalq said in a statement that seven of their activists were killed in the attacks launched May 2-13.

The Baghdad-based organisation also claimed that in one operation eight oil pipelines around the big Abadan refinery, still under repair from damage inflicted in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, were blown up in a night-time attack May 12.

There was no independent verification of the Mujahedeen's claims and no official comment from Tehran.

But Mujahedeen spokesman Shahin Gobadi told the Associated Press by telephone: "Our operations have been very much intensified inside Iran."

"Our blows against the regime are getting heavier and deadlier. This is a new phase of our campaign to topple the regime in Tehran," he said.

According to the Mujahedeen statement, telefaxed to the AP in Cyprus, the biggest clash was near the Meymand River northwest of the town of Dehloran, 40 kilometres from the Iraqi border May 13.

The Mujahedeen said scores of Revolutionary Guards were killed or wounded in a firefight that lasted several hours. Six Mujahedeen fighters were reported slain.

In two other reported clashes around Dehloran May 12, at least 90 Revolutionary Guards were killed or wounded in two other rebel attacks. No Mujahedeen casualties were listed.

Mr. Gobadi stressed that none of the operations were mounted from Mujahedeen bases inside Iraq, but were carried out by rebel units inside the Islamic republic.



Ezer Weizman inspects army guard of honour as he officially takes office as president of Israel Thursday (AFP photo)

Weizman sworn in as president

TEL AVIV (R) — Ezer Weizman, a former combat pilot with a sharp tongue and a passion for peace with the Arabs, became Israel's seventh president Thursday.

Mr. Weizman, 68, was sworn into the five-year ceremonial job in Israel's parliament. His uncle Chaim Weizmann was the first president at Israel's founding in 1948.

In a speech after taking the oath of office Mr. Weizman, who helped forge the Jewish state's peace with Egypt in 1979, urged Israelis not to lose hope in their quest for peace with other Arabs.

Mr. Weizman could clash with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and other Israeli leaders if he uses his position to promote such pet ideas as the return of the Golan Heights to Syria or talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

He said Israel must not be deterred by attacks on Jews or hardships in negotiating with Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinians in talks under way in Washington.

He told reporters at a post-

swearing-in party he would do his best not to "heaven forbid, sit on government toes."

However, he added: "I don't think a president must intervene in matters only in the case of catastrophes, but he should coordinate, to understand, and to advise."

He said he could "lend a hand" to Prime Minister Rabin, whom he has known since early army days 45 years ago.

In 1989 Mr. Weizman sparked a government crisis when as science minister in a left-right unity cabinet, he faced accusations of illegal contacts with the PLO.

He never denied the charges and the crisis ended with rightist Likud Party Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir reducing Mr. Weizman's powers in cabinet.

Mr. Weizman was born in Tel Aviv in 1924 to Zionist aristocracy in what was then Palestine, under British rule.

He flew for the British in World War II and, as Israeli air force chief, built the Israeli air force.

He told reporters at a post-

Khartoum opposes peace talks summit

CAIRO (AFP) — Sudan has turned down a Nigerian proposal for a four-country summit to relaunch stalled peace talks with southern rebels, the Egyptian paper Al Hayat reported here Friday as the talks were again adjourned.

It said Nigeria's onetime Interior Minister Tunji Olagunju, chairman of the peace talks in the Nigerian capital Abuja, had in the past two days visited Sudan, Kenya and Uganda with the suggestion that they set up a summit with Nigeria.

According to diplomatic sources quoted by the paper, the military junta in Khartoum would have been required to make concessions on security matters and the issue of enforcing Islamic law.

Unidentified Western parties were behind the idea of the summit, Al Hayat said.

The Sudanese government turned down the proposal on the grounds that it exceeded the terms of reference of the current negotiations and was intended to put pressure on the government, the paper said.

Government spokesman Ali Al Haj complained that an attempt to settle the problem of the civil war outside the framework of direct talks was an infringement of Sudanese sovereignty and thus to be rejected, Al Hayat reported.

In Abuja, where the parley has been bogged down since April 26, both sides warned Friday that a negative reaction to Nigeria's latest mediation bid could scupper the talks for the time being, a delegate with the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) said. Mr. Olagunju's report on his mission would be decisive for what happened next.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Pro-Israeli militiamen killed in Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — Guerrillas killed a member of Israel's proxy Lebanese militia in fighting early Friday inside Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon, security sources said. South Lebanon Army (SLA) militiamen were on routine patrol in the Qantara region of the central sector of the zone when they intercepted an anti-Israeli commando. A SLA militiaman was killed in the 30-minute fighting, the source said. On Thursday afternoon assailants fired anti-tank rockets against SLA positions, including Qantara, Lebanon police reported. The Faithful Resistance, a group close to the Iranian-backed Muslim fundamentalist Hezbollah movement, claimed responsibility for the attack. A statement in Beirut said a remote-control bomb exploded at the passage of a joint Israeli-SLA patrol "killing and wounding several people in the ranks of the enemy."

Greece hopes Russia will reconsider veto

ATHENS (R) — Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis Thursday urged Russia to reconsider its veto of reforming the financing of the U.N. peacekeeping operation in Cyprus. Russia, in financial trouble and reluctant to take on new burdens, stunned the Security Council Tuesday by vetoing a British resolution to share the costs of the 1,500-strong U.N. peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) among all U.N. members instead of relying on voluntary donations. "I want to hope that Russia will reconsider its veto and that the peacekeeping force will remain in Cyprus," Mr. Mitsotakis told reporters after talks with Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides in Athens. "It is not possible to talk about stationing tens of thousands of U.N. troops in other parts of the world and not be able to maintain a small force in Cyprus," he added. UNFICYP, which patrols a 180-kilometres buffer zone dividing Cyprus, is the only U.N. peacekeeping force to rely on voluntary donations. It has been stationed on the island since 1964 between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. Contributing countries are disenchanted with the financial burden and lack of progress in negotiations to reunite the island. Mr. Clerides has told the United Nations that he would ask Greece to send troops to Cyprus if, a withdrawal or reduction in UNFICYP endangered its security.

Austrian chancellor to visit Israel

TEL AVIV (R) — Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky will make a four-day visit to Israel from June 8. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's office said Friday. "This will be the first official visit by an Austrian chancellor to Israel," it said in a statement. Israel-Austrian relations deteriorated during Kurt Waldheim's six years as Austrian president, which ended in 1992. Dr. Waldheim, a former U.N. secretary-general, denied accusations that during his service in Adolf Hitler's army in World War II he knew of people being deported to death camps. Relations improved after Mr. Vranitzky, in a formal declaration in 1991, said Austria, incorporated into the Nazi Third Reich in 1938, had been not only victims of Nazism but also its servants. During the visit Hebrew University will grant Mr. Vranitzky an honorary doctorate of philosophy, citing his declaration and his key role in the fight against fascism and anti-Semitism.

Iran, Afghanistan to help refugee return

NICOSIA (R) — Iran, Afghanistan and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have agreed to help 700,000 refugees who fled to Iran during the Afghan civil war return home by the end of the year. The official Iranian news agency IRNA said delegations from the two countries met a UNHCR team in Tehran Thursday and agreed to set up bases in Afghanistan to help ease the return. IRNA quoted the leader of the Iranian delegation Ahmad Hosseini as saying 518,000 of an estimated three million Afghans who fled to Iran had already headed home voluntarily. He said the UNHCR had given material aid to 55,000 of them. In February the governor of Iran's Khorasan province ordered police to round up and deport 300,000 unregistered Afghan refugees from the province, which borders Afghanistan. IRNA also quoted a UNHCR official as saying only \$16 million had been allocated to the repatriation of Afghan refugees, which he described as "insufficient." He said the UNHCR gave 25- and 50-kilo bags of wheat to each refugee who returned home, to support them for three months.

Israeli admits heroin charge in New Zealand

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand (AFP) — An Israeli admitted Friday to importing heroin valued at around 80,000 New Zealand dollars (\$43,600) when he appeared in the district court here. Police Sergeant Pat Creasey told the court the heroin, which weighed some nine grammes (one third of an ounce), was internally secreted in four rubber bags. Avraham Alkarif, aged 27, unemployed, was convicted and committed in custody to the high court for sentence on June 1. Sgt. Creasey said Mr. Alkarif was searched by customs at Christchurch on his return from four days in Thailand and two in Singapore. He denied any involvement with drugs, refused a medical examination, and refused to eat or drink. The defendant later agreed to a medical scan and four objects showed up in his lower rectum. Eventually these were recovered and found to contain 40 per cent pure heroin.

Peres to visit India, China

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres leaves Sunday on a visit to India and China, both of which established the first official visit by an Israeli foreign minister to India. Mr. Peres' predecessor, David Levy, was in Peking 16 months ago to sign the protocol establishing diplomatic ties between the two sides. India, a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement and a strong supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), had withheld recognition of Israel since its founding in 1948, insisting that Israel resolve its conflict with the Arabs. India agreed to diplomatic relations to join in multilateral talks tied to the U.S.-backed Middle East peace process. In a news conference earlier this week, Mr. Peres said he hoped his visit to new Delhi would mark "a new chapter in relations between India and Israel." He said he expected to sign several cooperation agreements on culture and tourism and would offer Israel's help in agricultural projects. "Here, no matter that India is so large and great and Israel is so small, we can cooperate to a very great extent," he said.

U.N. guards leave Iraq amid security fears

SULAYMANIYAH (AFP) — The United Nations has started withdrawing U.N. guards from northern Iraq amid a security breakdown in Kurdistan, where four aid workers have been killed since January.

The United Nations said Thursday the withdrawal of the 236 guards was to begin on Friday and continue until mid-June because it had not received funds to finance the operation.

The first batch of 50 guards were repatriated Thursday and Friday, according to a U.N. source in Baghdad.

Besides the killing of two

Kurds, a Belgian and an Australian, a hospital in Kurdistan was bombed and explosives had been placed on vehicles transporting aid to the Kurds in northern Iraq since January, aid workers said.

The four dead worked for non-governmental aid agencies, which have been operating in Iraqi Kurdistan alongside U.N. aid workers.

The breakdown in security led to the departure at the end of April of the Medecins Sans Frontieres, a French group, while another non-governmental agency, Equilibre, pulled out its nationals from the region temporarily.

"The U.N. guards spend more time protecting themselves than protecting the others," charged a German aid worker who declined to be named.

"But their departure would be a blow for the Kurdish people who still rely a lot on humanitarian aid," he added.

Added Fabienne Buly, of France-Libre: "The situation has deteriorated lately. We must be extra careful."

"When the Kurds give me sensitive information about security, I refer it to the non-governmental agencies by walkie-talkie rather than inform the guards first," she said in Sulaymaniyah, home to 600,000 inhabitants.

Two letters complaining about their poor conditions and saying Pakistani officials involved in the negotiations to free them were holding up their release.

Islamabad denied the accusation and said the diplomats had travelled into Afghanistan in spite of advice from Pakistani officials.

Kidnapping is common on Pakistan's border with Afghanistan.

Several Chinese workers at a copper mine in southern Baluchistan were kidnapped by Afghan guerrillas and taken over the border last year. They were released several days later and Pakistani officials said no ransom was paid.

Pakistani officials said Mr. Dodds, a second secretary at the deputy high commission in Karachi, had told local authorities about his visit to Quetta.

Pakistani officials said they had sent food, fruit and mineral water across the border regularly for the diplomats.

The group arrived with two armed guards provided by the government of the southern province of Sind, of which Karachi is the capital.

The diplomats smuggled out

Islamic Jihad condemns verdict against U.S. embassy bombers

BEIRUT (AP) — Islamic Jihad, the spearhead of anti-Western extremism during Lebanon's civil war, has denounced a military court ruling that denied amnesty for suspects in the 1983 U.S. embassy bombing, newspapers said Friday.

A purported Islamic Jihad statement, published by the Lebanese dailies Al Nahar and Al Hayat, said: "The heroic operation, whose perpetrators some collaborators are trying to convict, was aimed at hitting the ill-omened nest that masterminded the Zionist invasion of Lebanon" in 1982.

The identical statements were left in the mailboxes of the two newspapers. But there was no way to prove their authenticity.

The military court of appeal Tuesday reversed an earlier ruling by a lower military tribunal that the suicide bombing of the embassy was a political crime, whose perpetrators were covered by a post-civil war general amnesty.

The denunciation published Friday described the ruling by the country's highest martial judicial authority as "submission by Lebanese authorities to the collaborators."

It urged the government to "respect the will of your people... and value its sacrifices."

However, the statement did not contain any threats against the West, which had characterised Islamic Jihad's communiques in the 1980s, when the group led bombing and kidnapping campaigns against Western targets and nationals.

Islamic Jihad is an underground group which claimed responsibility for the April 18, 1983, suicide bombing of the U.S. embassy.

In addition to the driver of the explosives-laden truck, 62 perished in the bombing.

Six men, including five Lebanese and an Egyptian, have been charged in absentia with acquiring the truck, rigging it with explosives and setting it off at the seven-storey seaside embassy compound.

The attack ushered in an era of extremism during which 241 American servicemen and 58 French paratroopers were killed in twin suicide bombing Oct. 23, 1983.

In the next four years, Islamic Jihad and other groups kidnapped 92 Westerners in Lebanon, many of them Americans. The last American hostage, former Associated Press Middle East correspondent Terry Anderson, was freed in December 1991.

The Lebanese government issued a general amnesty in August 1991 for all political crimes committed during the 1975-1990 civil war.

Last month, a Beirut military court said the pardon covers the embassy's suspected bombers.

That aroused fears that kidnappers, bombers and hijackers would evade prosecution — a precedent that would complicate the government's campaign to shed off the country's extremist image.

The masterminds of most crimes remain at large and many of them commute between east Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and Iran.

This week's ruling by the military court of appeals was expected to avoid a new confrontation with the United States.

Afghan kidnappers free three European diplomats

QUETTA, Pakistan (R) — An Afghan guerrilla commander has released three European diplomats he had kidnapped at gunpoint last month, Pakistan and British officials said.

Jack Dodd of Britain, Stefan Elbert of Germany, and Gert Piepen from the Netherlands were freed unconditionally and handed over to officials in Pakistan, British diplomats said.

"They have been walked across the border," one said.

Guerrilla commander Ghulam Nabi Noorza released them into the hands of Afghan elders in the border town of Spinboldak, Irfan Elahi, assistant commissioner of Pakistan's Chaman border district, told Reuters.

The Afghan officials accompanied them to the border where they were handed over to Pakistani officials.

"Noorza released them today unconditionally," Mr. Elahi said by telephone from Chaman.

"We're delighted," British High Commissioner Sir Nicholas

Barrington said in Islamabad. "It's been a long process and we're grateful for the efforts of the Pakistani officials and our friends in Afghanistan."

The three officers had been on a duty tour to Baluchistan.

Mr. Noorza, a member of the Hardline Hezb-e-Islami party of Afghan Prime Minister-designate Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, demanded the release of two of his men arrested in Pakistan on charges of gun-running in return for the diplomats.

Pakistani officials said they had denied permission to meet the men but was told by visitors that all three were unshaven and their clothing was dirty.

Pakistani officials said they had sent food, fruit and mineral water across the border regularly for the diplomats.

Afghan officials said initially

the diplomats were arrested for entering Afghanistan without valid papers.

The three officers had been on a duty tour to Baluchistan.

Dr. Mohammad Ali Sawa ... 73036
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayem ... 620114
Dr. Yousef Nusir ... 751144
Dr. Javed Tariq ... 661176
First pharmacy ... 778234
Al Aqsa pharmacy ... 637033
Nairoksh pharmacy ... 632372
Al Salam pharmacy ... 6367

Home News

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Crown Prince gives blood to help campaign

AMMAN (J.T.) — Underlining the importance of the current two-week blood drive and public awareness campaign, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath and several members of the Royal family Thursday donated blood at the Blood Bank and urged Jordanians to follow suit. According to Blood Bank Director General Janet Merza, the campaign which started on May 8 will continue through May 23. Dr. Merza said the campaign was also aimed at removing misconceptions about blood donation and its effects on humans.

Remote-sensing conference begins Monday

AMMAN (Petra) — Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the second pan-Arab conference on establishing an Arab association for remote-sensing and geographical data systems will be held here on May 17. Participants in this three-day meeting will discuss several working papers on the importance of establishing a pan-Arab association for geographical data, applications of remote-sensing and case studies on such applications, marketing of geographical information in the Arab countries and the use of remote-sensing technology in defining and management of natural resources. Taking part in the conference will be representatives of ten Arab countries. The conference is organised by the Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre.

Communications disorders meeting ends

AMMAN (Petra) — The Second International Symposium for Communications Disorders concluded in three-day meetings Thursday at the University of Jordan. Participants in the symposium, organised by the University's Centre for Phonetics Research, called for conducting extensive research on speech and language disorders and learning difficulties, especially dyslexia, according to centre Director Yousef Al Hallees. Dr. Hallees said the conference discussed several working papers dealing with the most recent methods of diagnosing speech and language problems as well as hearing and reading difficulties. A total of 30 specialists and experts from Jordan, Arab and European countries and the U.S. participated in the symposium.

Educational reform meeting starts Monday

AMMAN (Petra) — A three-day regional symposium on educational renovation will be held here on May 17, according to Director General of the Department of Planning, Educational Development and Research Mohammad Ayyash. Dr. Ayyash said the symposium will review achievements of the educational renovation programme, launched by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) regional unit for coordinating the educational renovation programme for development in the Arab World. Participants will discuss basic education, development of special education, school dropouts, literacy and promoting girls' education. Taking part in the symposium will be representatives of Jordan, Iraq, Algeria, Bahrain, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, in addition to the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO).

Community colleges seminar begins at Al Quds

AMMAN (Petra) — A seminar on community colleges in Jordan will be held Sunday at Al Quds College in Amman. The seminar, which will be opened by Lower House of Parliament Speaker Abdul Latif Arabyat, and in which a large number of educationalists will participate, will discuss issues related to community colleges and university education, the influence of foreign labour on job opportunities, training opportunities for community college graduates and other issues.

Environment officials head for U.N. Nairobi meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razak Tubaibat Friday announced that Jordan will take part in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 17th board meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. Dr. Tubaibat, head of the Jordanian delegation to the meeting, will leave today accompanied by Environment Department Director Saleh Al Sh'are and other senior ministry officials. The 10-day session will focus on ways of dealing with pollution, desertification, poverty, human settlement, protection of the soil and forests and protection of the marine environment, said Dr. Tubaibat.

Iraq, Jordan land transport panel to meet today

AMMAN (Petra) — The general assembly of the Iraqi-Jordanian Land Transport Committee will open its meetings in Amman today. The Jordanian side to the meetings will be headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Transport Minister Ali Suhaimat, and the Iraqi side will be headed by the Iraqi Minister of Transport and Communications Abdul Sattar Al Ma'ini who arrived in Amman Thursday. The assembly will discuss in its two-day meetings the company's workplan and financial situation. The company is considered the largest Arab land transport company.

Transport mechanics chief heads for Algiers seminar

AMMAN (Petra) — President of the General Union of Workers in Land Transport and Mechanics Ibrahim Al Ajarmeh, who is also assistant secretary of the Arab Land Transport Workers Federation, Sunday leaves Amman for Algiers to participate in a seminar on "Negotiations and Group Contracts" which will open May 18. Mr. Ajarmeh said the week-long seminar will discuss issues pertaining to group contracts and negotiations between parties to the production process, the situation of the labour movement in the Arab World, means of developing it and ways to enhance ties between Arab labour unions. While in Algiers, he said, he will meet with his Algerian counterpart to discuss scopes of cooperation between the Jordanian and Algerian unions of land transport workers and mechanics. Later in the month, Mr. Ajarmeh will visit Tunisia and Morocco for the same purpose.

By Sawsan Ghosheh
Special to the Jordan Times

Interview believed to be reason for terminating parliament employee

AMMAN — The new Press and Publications Law, which will go into effect on May 17, urges that government institutions and officials facilitate the work of journalists in "seeking the truth." But despite some heavy criticism levelled at the new legislation, it can only be an improvement on the current law, which, in its dying days seems to have been used to punish a government employee who spoke to the press in order to improve the status of his institution.

The director of parliament's Research and Study Centre (RSC), Mustafa Al Odwan, lost his post last week, after an interview he gave appeared in the Jordan Times, leading to the inevitable conclusion that the article was the reason behind the decision to end his services for the centre.

Parliamentary sources said the Jordan Times article did not please the general secretariat of



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan taking part in the national blood donation campaign launched by the Jordan National Blood Bank



Her Royal Highness Princess Basma and visitors of the Noel Foundation admire hand-woven carpets in Ma'in

QAF pilot dairy project benefits Ma'in community

AMMAN (J.T.) — In Ma'in, a group of poor rural women are discovering their potentials, generating income for their families and helping to increase the national food production at the same time.

This group is part of a pilot project for food and dairy processing, initiated by the Queen Alia Social Welfare Fund for future projects that serve the aim of both organisations to help people build their future.

The mission of the QAF is similar to that of the Queen Alia Fund in that it seeks to encourage and support women in their efforts to create a better existence for themselves, their families, their communities, and their world.

The delegation visited QAF projects and social community development centers in Madaba, Ma'in, Mieh, Taibeh, Aqaba and Diz.

"We were all surprised and touched by the quality and impact of the Queen Alia Fund projects in rural regions in Jordan," said Mrs. Noel Irwin Hentschel, president and founder of the Noel Foundation. "I will always remember this day as the day I fell in love with the Jordanian children," said Arthur Mahon, a member of the foundation.

The visiting delegation, including

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Art exhibition entitled "Fragments: Weavings and Works on Paper" by Kevin A. Hinch and Margaret M. Hinch at the American Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by students from Nazareth College at the French Cultural Centre.

EUROPEAN FILM WEEK

- ★ Italian film entitled "Il Giardino dei Cilegi" (The Cherry Orchard) at 5 p.m. and the British film entitled "Truly, Madly, Deeply" at 8 p.m. at the Royal Cultural Centre.

giving information to the media without due permission of his superior. But journalists and observers were quick to criticise the move upon hearing of it. Salameh Ne'mat, a Jordanian journalist, said "it is very sad to see that freedom of expression, which is a pre-condition for reform, is being undermined in such a manner. How can we have reform if official attitudes do not allow for diagnosing and discussing problems that need to be tackled in order for us to develop better functioning institutions?"

"Parliament, of all state institutions, should be the most tolerant of the freedom of speech," a Jordanian columnist said.

"To punish an employee for saying what is on his mind, and for urging positive change in his institution, is unwarranted at best. In this new age of democracy, parliament should be at the forefront of those government institutions which have to democratisate their structure and instill in their staff the spirit of openness, not rigidity and fear."

Amman-Tehran flights may resume in summer '94

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Direct flights between Amman and Tehran, Iran, are tentatively expected to be resumed in the summer of next year depending on the outcome of planned discussions on the technical and commercial aspects of the operation, officials said Friday.

Senior Civil Aviation Authority officials from Jordan and Iran have agreed in principle to amend a 1977 air transport accord, clearing the way for the resumption of direct flights.

The agreement in principle, came during meetings held with a visiting Iranian delegation and the Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Minutes of the meetings were signed Thursday by the head of the visiting delegation, Deputy Minister of Transport Mohammad Narjavan, who is also chief of Iran's Civil Aviation Authority, and Jordan's CAA Director-General Ahmad Juweiber.

"Iran Air is short of capacity, although its option to fly to Amman remains open," noted an RJ source. "It may not start flights to Amman simultaneously with RJ."

Matters related to landing charges, handling arrangement on the ground and similar issues are expected to be on the table in Amman in September or October, for finalisation between Iran and RJ.

Juweiber told the Jordan Times.

Air and RJ, the source said. RJ suspended its flights to Tehran shortly before Jordan and Iran broke diplomatic relations in 1981 as a result of conflicting positions in the Iran-Iraq war.

These were restored in 1990, and since then, exports to both sides have improved considerably.

According to the RJ source, "prospects are good for Amman-Tehran flights in view of the picking up trade, as well as the existence of Islamic holy places in Jordan, such as the tombs of the Companions of the Prophet Mohammad."

Furthermore, the source noted, "there is a steady flow of Iranian exports to Jordan and an air link would come in handy for the exporters from Iran."

Amman could also serve as a major transit point between Tehran and the U.S., as well as several European countries. Iran Air does not fly to the U.S. and its European operations are limited when compared with Royal Jordanian.

At present air travellers between Amman and Tehran have to go through Damascus or any of the Gulf airports.

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Unlicensed firearms to be handed over to authorities

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

the order, pending Parliament approval which came on March 17, 1993.

The majority of deputies approved a recommendation by the House Administrative Committee that the government had legal grounds for issuing regulations on the possession of arms in Jordan. The new regulations allow people to keep pistols and hunting rifles, but not automatic weapons.

Under the regulations:

The government will license only revolvers, pistols and hunting rifles and people possessing these types of firearms should license them.

All other firearms are banned. Those who possess them should hand them over to the police or a putting an end to festive firings.



A 41 cubic yard electric walking dragline at El Hassa mine strips the overburden with a capacity of 25,000³ per day (File photo)

Jordan, India to examine phosphate, potash industries

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) and the Arab Potash Company (APC) are organising a five-day seminar in Amman on the fertiliser industry next month.

JPMC Director General

Thabet Taher announced Friday that a joint committee from both companies is sponsoring the meeting in which experts from India and Jordan will review mutual experiments and expertise.

A total of 17 working papers will be examined by the participants and industry experts, Mr. Taher said in a statement to the

Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He said India was chosen because it is the main importer of Jordanian phosphate and is undertaking joint ventures with Jordan to produce phosphate-based fertilisers.

The delegates to the June 13-17 meeting will also include university professors, representatives of various concerned ministries and other institutions and company engineers.

During the seminar, the participants will visit the sites of the two companies and the fertiliser complex in Aqaba, said Mr. Taher.

India and Jordan are jointly implementing a fertiliser industry project at the phosphate site of Shidet in southern Jordan, which is expected to have a total annual production capacity of 220,000 tonnes of phosphoric acid, employing 700,000 tonnes of raw phosphate, according to Mr. Taher.

He said the production of the plant was expected to start by the end of 1995.

Similar seminars organised jointly by India and Jordan were held earlier in Amman and New Delhi, noted Mr. Taher.

JORDAN EXPRESS

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An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Twisting aims may help

THE FAILURE of Washington to sway its European partners to its view on the Bosnian conflict raises doubts about both the status of the U.S. as the only remaining superpower and the clout of the new American president in the international arena.

Since he assumed power in January, President Bill Clinton has been orchestrating continuous promises and pledges to the effect that his administration would no longer stomach the Serbian aggression and atrocities. Clinton's stance on the Bosnian tragedy pre-dated his election in November when he campaigned rather emotionally and forcefully in favour of stopping the Serbian crimes against humanity in rump Yugoslavia. Ever since, he has been making one statement after the other that the time had arrived for a meaningful action in defence of the Muslims of Bosnia. By not acting on that repeated threat, however, the U.S. president risks appearing weak on a clear matter that shocked the conscience of his people as well as that of humanity.

This apparent weakness comes on the heels of Clinton's failure thus far to win the support of the U.S. Congress on key elements of his economic package. The White House cannot afford to look so lame so early in the life of the new administration. If the president is truly agonising over the fate of the Muslims in Bosnia, he has plenty of opportunities to correct the situation and in the process salvage his reputation as a world leader capable of acting effectively and forcefully to end bloody conflicts.

If the U.N. Security Council is incapable of acting on the Bosnian scene because of Moscow's clear biased position in support of the Serbs, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) or the Non-Aligned Movement can refer the entire file on Bosnia to the General Assembly. The assembly can be convened for an emergency session and under the famous "uniting for peace" resolution of 1950, the members of the United Nations can authorise military action against the rebellious Serbs even if the Security Council continues to be paralysed by the attitudes of Moscow and Paris. The 1950 resolution was improvised by Washington to permit large-scale military operations against North Korea and its allies in the wake of the Soviet veto in the Security Council in the same year.

In fact, the U.S. does not even need a decision by the General Assembly to act and make good on its pledges to do something about the Serbian atrocities and acts of genocide since the already adopted Security Council resolutions on Yugoslavia are broad enough to allow for even unilateral military actions. President Clinton has to show strength and determination and twist a few arms if necessary to prove his sincerity and resolve. By so doing, he will not only restore popularity and credibility for himself. He will also regain for his nation the prestige that it has clearly lost when U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher came back empty-handed last week after failing to rally the support of the U.S.' closest allies.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

DISAPPOINTMENT AND frustration is the general feeling prevailing in the Arab World following the total collapse of the peace talks in Washington, said Al Dustour daily. Nine sessions of Arab-Israeli talks have been wasted over more than a year of diplomacy and empty promises from the U.S. administrations, the paper said. It was another opportunity wasted and another chance for establishing peace missed because the Israelis continue to hold on to their intransigent position while the Americans continue to back away from their pledges and promises to help the two sides attain peace, the paper continued. Since the outset of the ninth session it was clear that Israel was not willing to offer any concession or reach a compromise on any of the topics, and it was clear from the beginning that the Clinton administration was not willing to commit itself to a meaningful action to force the Israelis to respect the international legitimacy, the paper added. The past three weeks, the U.S. administration played the role of bystander passively watching the Arabs and the Israelis meet and refraining from taking any step towards bringing the views of the two sides closer, it pointed out. The ninth session was in fact a testing ground for the American administration which had claimed it would play the role of full partner to help reach a settlement, the paper said. With the loss of this last chance, it said, Washington has lost its credibility, and it is reasonable to believe that the position of those who had originally opposed the negotiations in the first place is strengthened as they indeed proved to be futile.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily attributed the current border dispute between Cairo and Khartoum to differences in general policies following Cairo's accusing Khartoum of encouraging terrorism actions in Egypt and playing to the tunes of Tehran. Tareq Masa'weh implied in his column that Egypt was acting upon directives from Washington which has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the Sudanese government's policies and which, said the writer, had been fomenting the north-south strife in Sudan by fuelling the rebellion in the south, arming the separatist groups and sabotaging the north-south peace talks. It is to be recalled that the Western nations, which had colonised the Arab World among other parts of the world had worked out maps for the Arabs. These artificial created borders could, at any minute, be exploited and transformed into trouble spots, the writer pointed out. It was the English who had sown the seeds for this dispute and it is the Americans who are now trying to stir trouble between the two Arab neighbours, he charged.

BOSTON — It wasn't the spies who won the cold war. I do not believe that in the end spies mattered very much. Their capsule isolation and their remote theorizing actually prevented them from seeing, as late as 1987 or 1988, what anybody in the street could have told them: "It's over. We've won. The Iron Curtain is crashing down! The monolith we fought is a bag of bones! Come out of your trenches and smile!"

Even the victory, for them, was a cunning Bolshevik trick. And, anyway, what had they got to smile about? It was a victory achieved by openness, not secrecy. By frankness, not intrigue. The Soviet empire did not fall because spooks had bugged the men's room in the Kremlin or put broken glass in Mrs. Brezhnev's bath but because running a huge, closed, repressive society in the 1980s had become — economically, socially, militarily and technologically impossible.

And the joke is that if the outcome of the cold war had been left to the spies, then on all the evidence so far our spies would have come a poor second. And thank God for it.

The strength of a true democracy is that it cannot command the fear, the discipline, the absolutism or the secret prisons that are the prerequisite of a police state. The strength of America is in her frankness, her mobility of mind, her willingness to declare herself, take risks and change. Not in her secrecy.

And today, Americans and

Russians are working, if not hand in hand, at least side by side to dismantle the arsenals for which they stretched their economies to breaking point.

The impossible happened immediately. The difficult, it seems, is going to take a great deal longer.

The difficult is realising that we are shorn of all our old excuses for not addressing the real problems of the earth, that we can no longer put our humanity on hold in order to defend humanity.

The difficult is finding a better name for the compassionate aspects of communism: because we need them as much today as we ever did. They just got into the wrong hands.

For the uninstructed public, the spies popped up like gray ghosts scurrying across the world stage: the Rosenbergs, Alger Hiss (maybe), Abel, Fuchs, Portocorvo, Nunn, May, Kroger, Burgess, McLean, Blunt, Philby — on and on, these lonely decisioners held up a dark mirror to us, and the man in the street peered shily in, and shuddered.

When people tell me I am a genre writer, I can only reply, "Yes, but the cold war, was a genre war." And now, thank God, my element, my genre, is no longer at the centre of our concerns. Though the spies spy on, they cannot impress us as they used to.

Spying was the passion of my time. I was there, I felt some of it on my own body. I reported on it. And as I grew away from it, and recollect it in tranquility, I

made it my way of looking at life. So I ask myself: What did we become when we were who we were? And is it still around? And did we, in fighting for our freedom, give too much of it away?

The cold war is over, but I don't remember any singing in the streets or church bells ringing. Are we too tired to sing? Or too dazed by our luck? Has something crippled us on our way from there to here?

Is our doctrine of endless expansion in a shrinking world as played out as the doctrine of endless revolution that we have just seen packing? A few years ago, when a far country was threatened by communism, we hurried to its aid. Their problem was our problem. We made heroes out of tinpot dictators we should have entertained in the

woodshed.

Too often we confused anti-colonialism with communism, but then the Communists did that, too. We gave money. Mostly, American money. Some of it feathered some pretty disgusting nests, but some of it got to the right places. At least we acted. We said we cared. Our response to communism was sometimes crude and sometimes misguided, but it was the only one we had. It was justified and it worked.

Today, when a not-so-far country is torn apart by civil war, and one of its ethnic minorities is being put to torture, rape and murder before our eyes, our politicians tell us not to become emotional. They mean: If you do, you'll have to pay for it.

"We didn't win the cold war just to get involved in other peo-

ple's fights. What's a little ethnic cleansing between ancient enemies? This is history man."

Meanwhile, America stands where she never stood before: as the undisputed victor of a two-generation-long war of attrition, as the world's only superpower and — increasingly, it seems — its only arbiter.

But Europe and America still hesitate. Because we are afraid not just of this involvement — in former Yugoslavia — but of the precedent we would be creating.

"So we go in," say the doubtfuls. "We bomb. We put in ground troops. We clean the place up as soon as we get out there start again. Is that what we're into now? Quartering the globe, intervening wherever the news media decide they can raise a tear in the public eye? Next stop Sudan? And after that, how about we grapple with the former Soviet Union maybe? They're having atrocities daily over there, while our eyes are still fixed on former Yugoslavia."

And then that same old sneering cry: "We're being too emotional."

Except.

Except that, if there is one eternal truth of politics it is that there are always a dozen good reasons for doing nothing. To do something, you've got to want to do it. Like, for instance, Desert Storm or the Falklands.

Then we're talking spheres of interest and geopolitics and honoring unbreakable promises. And we're allowed to be as emotional

as we like. Just as long as we remember to keep our pity under control elsewhere.

Alas, whatever the outcome of the present argument about what to do with former Yugoslavia, I don't think there's any way on earth that the United States can escape the responsibility for repeated and risky foreign intervention in the coming decades.

With the clamps of the cold war removed, old feuds are going to flare up everywhere. A Pax Americana of some kind is inevitable.

The fight against communism diminished us. That's why we were unable to rejoice at our victory. It left us a state of fear and corrosive orthodoxy. It licensed our excesses, and we didn't like ourselves the better for them. It dulled our love of dissent and our sense of life's adventure.

In my country, and perhaps in America as well, the service industries of criticism have almost drowned the magic of creation. Our intellectuals hate too much. Our press revels in public executions. We are poisoning ourselves with malice. Yet we take no risks. We are not brave. Our orthodoxy still gives us no way out.

Yet we have never been so free. We no longer need to clip the wings of our humanity. It's time we flew again — International Herald Tribune.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Talks of peace fizz out as Arab foreign ministers expected to take decision

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

The aborted ninth round of Arab-Israeli peace talks, the repercussions of the invalidation of the Iraqi 25-banknote bill, the disputed Halayeb territory on the border between Egypt and Sudan, as well as a number of domestic issues were given prominence in the Jordanian press last week.

As was expected, the ninth round of peace talks in Washington had the same fate as the previous rounds: total collapse and failure, said Al Dustour daily. The ninth round proved that Israel is not serious about peace with the Arabs and will not implement any U.N. resolutions, the paper added. Therefore, said the paper, the Arab foreign ministers are expected to take a final decision with regard to the continuation of the peace process.

Abdul Rahim Omar, a columnist in Al Ra'i, said that only the use of arms can make Israel understand that must respect U.N. resolutions and the rights of others. He said that the talks have failed simply because they were not linked in any way to the ongoing battles in the streets of Palestine.

He said that as long as the United States, which backs Israel in every way, remains hostile towards the Arabs nothing can be achieved.

Saleh Eikur, a writer in Sawt Al Shabab, mocked the statements of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks. The delegation leaders have deceived the Palestinian people into believing that they had at last taken the initiative at the peace process in a manner that would ensure the success of the negotiations, said Eikur.

He said that the Palestinian delegation had launched a wide media campaign which gave the erroneous impression that a Palestinian-Israeli agreement was in the making.

His views were backed by Mona Shuqib, a columnist in Al Dustour, who said that Palestinian delegation members have been issuing statements contradicting each other and succeeded only in misleading the public. The Palestinian people wanted to hear statements reflecting objectively the progress of the talks and not mere expectations, she said. The public wanted solid facts rather than the creation of a false atmosphere of optimism, she added.

Mahmoud Subeih, a columnist in Al Ra'i, recalled that before the start of the ninth round American officials, including Bill Clinton, had been issuing stern warnings against those trying to obstruct the

peace process, saying that Washington would not remain passive at the talks.

In fact, Washington pledged to play the role of full partner in the peace process, added the writer. He said that the Americans, regrettably, allowed the Israelis to obstruct the peace talks and allowed themselves to remain passive regarding Israel's intransigent position, thus rendering the peace process a total failure.

Saleh Qallab called on the PLO to invite the Arabs to an urgent summit and ask for an explanation from those Arab countries which had exercised pressure on the Palestinians to return to the talks, which ended in failure. The columnist, who writes in Al Dustour, said that the PLO should strongly ask the Arab states to back its moves, at all international levels, to restore the rights of the Palestinians and accept its conditions for further talks with Israel from now on.

The writer said that following the Gulf war Iraq had tried to normalise its relations with the world community, but all its attempts ended in failure. Moreover, attempts on the part of other nations were made to destroy the Iraqi economy through its currency, thus prompting the Iraqi move.

This view was backed by economist Faheem Fanek who said that according to the Iraqi law no Iraqi currency was supposed to leave the country. Any Iraqi dinars found outside Iraq were illegal in the first place, said the writer in Al Ra'i. The speculators had hoped that one day they could exchange these dinars at the rate of three dollars to the dinar, thus amassing a fortune and further destroying the Iraqi economy, said the writer.

Al Dustour daily expressed apprehension that the dispute over Halayeb would drive Sudan and Egypt to war. The paper said that the two Arab states have been living in harmony for decades and it is sad to see them quarrelling over a disputed area whose problems could be settled amicably.

Abdul Rahim Omar, a columnist in Al Ra'i, said that the dispute was triggered by the official economic and political stands of Khartoum and Cairo vis-a-vis each other. He said that being hostile to Sudan, Egypt is trying to offer service to the enemies of this Arab nation like it did during the Gulf war on Iraq.

Mohammad Subeih, a columnist in Al Dustour, said that the government should take severe measures against the civil servants and employees in public institutions accepting gifts and favours from people who expect something in return, at the expense of the national interest.

Citing the example of China, where the government issued strict rules against accepting gifts, the writer said that in Jordan gifts are being given to all kinds of employees by private companies and in violation of Article 170 of the penal code which considers the acceptance of gifts as a bribe for which the culprit deserves two years imprisonment.

Saleh Eikur, a columnist in Sawt Al Shabab, called on the government to replace all non-Jordanian workers with job seekers in a strong move to end the unemployment problem.

interfere and control the current confusion and speculation in the local money markets.

Mahmoud Rimawi, who writes for Al Ra'i, said that it was the prerogative of the Iraqi government to protect the nation's interests in view of the continued sanctions and the economic deterioration.

The writer said that following the Gulf war Iraq had tried to normalise its relations with the world community, but all its attempts ended in failure. Moreover, attempts on the part of other nations were made to destroy the Iraqi economy through its currency, thus prompting the Iraqi move.

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Both parties went beyond simply articulating principles. We saw the evolution of positions and the beginning of the emergence of common elements in their stands on key issues," Mr. Djerejian said.

Although the Palestinians were dissatisfied with lack of improvements on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and reduced the size of their delegation and chose not to attend working group for the last few days of negotiations, he said, "they did have a joint statement," Mr. Djerejian explained.

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"We discussed the U.S. paper in detail yesterday and today with both Israel and the Palestinians and will continue to do so," he said. Tabled the paper was designed "to capture the substantive progress that the sides had

made during the last three weeks and help guide them toward areas that need to be discussed further," Mr. Djerejian said.

TALKS ADJOURN UNTIL JUNE

U.S., Israeli and Palestinian papers 'could make up joint statement'

WASHINGTON (USA) —

Arab-Israeli peace negotiations adjourned until June following three weeks of intense discussion and the active engagement of the United States as a full partner.

The leader of the U.S. peace talks team, Edward Djerejian, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, told a news briefing Thursday that all the negotiating tracks had "demonstrated a deeper discussion of substance and intense engagement."

The negotiations involve direct peace talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours — Syria, Lebanon and Jordan — and discussions between Israeli and Palestinian representatives on interim self-governing arrangements for the occupied territories.

"Consistent with the efforts by

Just as long as we keep our pity where, over the outcome, argument about whether there's any way the United States' responsibility for foreign intervention decisions, arms of the cold war, I could be going everywhere. A few kind is not.

ever isolating us — I don't see the America is going to be a spectator to the world's misfortune against communism.

That's what we're to rejoice at: the orthodoxy of ourselves, and ourselves, and our love of our life's adventure.

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— Inter-1 Tribune

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Eurovision stars groups from Bosnia, Croatia

By Anne Senior
Reuter

DUBLIN — The Eurovision Song Contest, the annual song extravaganza that gave the world lyrics like Boom Bang-A-Bang and La La La, has become an unlikely showcase for the suffering in the former Yugoslavia.

The contest, long pilloried by music critics as a platform for the bland and banal, is enjoying a new lease of life this year courtesy of entries from Bosnia and Croatia, and an offbeat venue — a show-jumping arena in rural Ireland.

A group of Bosnian musicians braved Sarajevo machine-gun fire to travel to this Saturday's songfest and Croatia is tipped for success with Don't Ever Cry, ensuring the much-derided but popular show will be an intriguing mix of pop and politics whatever its musical merits. Serbia is not taking part.

Bosnia's ballad "The Pain

Of The Whole World explores the plight of Serb besieged Sarajevo through a soldier's love song, striking a more serious note than the jaunty pop jingles that tend to score high marks with the juries of the 25 competing countries, all members of the European Broadcasting Union.

Ireland is already gripped by "Eurovision-fever," with newspapers devoting page after page to this year's entries and to Irish millionaire businessman Noel C. Duggan, who has the idea of holding the contest at his equestrian

arena in southwest Ireland, some 270 kilometres from Dublin.

Organisers reject the charge that Eurovision is, in the words of one Irish columnist, an "anachronistic showcase for puerile ditties," and insist the contest is undergoing a revival like 1970s hippy fashions and flared trousers.

"It has cult status," said Deirdre Henchy, head of Eurovision publicity for the state-owned television service RTÉ, which is broadcasting the 38th annual song contest live to an estimated 300 million viewers around Europe and beyond.

Millions more are expected to tune into recordings of the programme, which will be seen in a total of 33 countries.

"The media have been saying 'get out your tank-tops and your flares and sit down to Eurovision,'" Henchy said in a telephone interview from the contest venue in Millstreet, County Cork.

"It's part of the nostalgia

book we're having."

Scenes suggest the two-million-punt (\$3 million) contest is as much about promoting local tourism as European music, for Eurovision is not renowned for consistently good song-writing.

Previous winners include a host of near-nonsense titles, such as Spain's La La La in 1968, Britain's Boom-Bang-A-Bang in 1969, and Sweden's Digg-Loo-Digg-Ley from 1984.

Contestants are being

whisked off this week to be

filmed in Irish beauty spots, whose attractions will be beamed into millions of potential tourists' homes on Eurovision night.

"We are delighted to have this opportunity of attracting visitors to the southwest at the earlier part of the tourist season and thus increasing local revenue," RTÉ's Director

General Joe Barry said at the launch of the Millstreet project.

The tranquil village has been transformed into a high-tech communication hub for the contest. New telephone cables have been specially laid, a satellite station is ready to beam the tunes around the world, and the village has even been equipped with its first set of traffic lights.

Mr. Duggan, a self-made millionaire who pestered organisers with requests to hold the show at his Green Glens Arena after Ireland won last year in Sweden with Why Me? is being feted as a folk hero for boosting the local economy.

He said Tuesday he was "praying to God" everything would go right on the night.

The Bosnian group Fazila from Sarajevo, which describes itself as ethnically mixed, is hoping for a win for the strife-torn city. "We just pray God to have the peace in our country," said spokeswoman Ismeta Kravac in a RTE radio interview Tuesday, adding the group wanted Eurovision to be held in Sarajevo next year if they triumph Saturday.

But for the group, which left Sarajevo during a burst of shelling and machine-gun fire, it is probably not the winning but the taking part in a high-publicity contest that matters.

Croatia's patriotic song with a catchy English chorus is hot favourite with some bookmakers to win the contest on a sympathy vote. Other fancied entries are Britain's Sonja and the Jolly Bitter The Devil You Know and Ireland's If Your Eyes sung by Niamh Kavanagh.



Religion and nationalism could forge a healthy nation

By Zuleikha Abu Rishbeh

The following article is translated from Al Ra'i daily, where it appeared on May 14 1993.

The joke about a Soviet citizen who served as an American agent claiming he would, in a number of years, ruin the world's second major power without spending a single penny, by simply placing the wrong man in the wrong place, is not really a joke, but rather a fact. Indeed, this has been the *de facto* socialist experiment in the former Soviet Union and other Socialist nations.

The bureaucracy which had weakened this socialist experiment, has transformed the regime from one upholding the slogan of justice and equality into one which is plagued by administration and financial corruption.

This had been one of the main reasons for the dramatic collapse of the system. But there were other reasons like, for example, the attitude towards religion and nationalism. Under Soviet rule, the individual, as indeed the whole society, was deprived of exercising religion, and the regime considered religious people as enemies of communism. It was impossible under this regime for any religious person to reach a high and positive position.

Mosques, churches and religious men were a mere show case for the communist state which claimed that it was not anti-religion.

Coupled with the hostility towards religion, there had been open enmity towards nationalism. Communism was oriented against any form of nationalism because it believed in the unity of the working class around the world. It had thus succeeded in achieving this goal, to some extent by using oppression, but no sooner had the Soviet Union come face to face with the so-called perestroika than communism found itself confronting a great danger: the thirst of nationalities to emerge, the unity between East and West Germany, the independence of the Soviet republics.

Faced with this situation, the Soviet empire began to feel the urgent need to return to its real national and religious identity.

Any regime harbouring enmity towards religion and nationalism is bound to be facing a great danger because these two elements are deeply embedded in the nations of the world.

It is perhaps useful for all of us to learn from the Soviet experience and open our eyes the situation in the Arab World where the religious campaign is overshadowing all other feelings, resembling the struggle which communism had waged against nationalism.

However, we ought to dif-

ferentiate between pure religion and political religion. Pure religion is the one exercised by my mother, it is the one which caters to the needs of the spirit and the relationship between man and his creator. Political religion is that form of religion peddled by certain groups in their struggle towards acquiring power. Therefore, resisting these groups

should not be interpreted as resisting religion itself, regardless of these groups' claims that they have the right to wage a holy war.

But this statement should not in any way be interpreted as an advocacy to resist such groups by violence and force.

Generally speaking, the Arab area is currently witnessing a political Islam, which is alien to the nature of true Islam. This political Islam is a tool used by the Islamists who try to justify their struggle to attain power and draw around them followers, taking advantage of the fact that the Arab people are always ready and willing to accept Islamic teachings, especially when faced with difficult circumstances.

By contrast, within the capitalist system of the West we can see the power emanate from the fact that they grant freedom to individuals and groups, allowing them to freely exercise their own religious rites, leading their own spiritual lives or aspiring to attain their nationalistic goals.

These Western systems of governments have allowed the public the freedom of expression and criticism on any subject, including religion and national feelings.

But these systems, at the same time, have created appropriate mechanisms to resist extremism, racial and sexual discrimination.

In Britain, for instance, even the royal family did not escape the impudent criticism of the media and publications which have been revealing the secrets in the private life of the royal family members.

In the United States the system of government did not condone the Watergate scandal, neither has the public ever supported those who lack integrity; even George Bush, who was victorious in the Gulf war lost the support of the American electorate.

Now back to the nation's thirst for freedom and religious practice.

One can only warn that the "Islamists' thought" which openly declares its enmity towards nationalism is bound to face the same crisis like that of the Soviet Union should these groups attain their Goal and take over power.

They would be exercising the single party dictatorship, their ideology on others and depriving people of free expression.

It is perhaps useful for all of us to learn from the Soviet experience and open our eyes the situation in the Arab World where the religious campaign is overshadowing all other feelings, resembling the struggle which communism had waged against nationalism.

Should people be forced to accept this dominant power, by hook or by crook, the religious movement would be wielding the power with which it would control all aspects in people's lives. If

that happened, ordinary people who have been frustrated in the past will not find respite or a satisfactory solution to their lives. They would watch others exploiting the situation, joining the single party and acquiring higher positions.

In the search for religion and discovering facts, one is bound ailing social, cultural and economic realities.

In the absence of democracy, in light of repression and lack of social justice, due to the political and administrative corruption and the deteriorating economic situation and as a result of the continued defeats and conflicts, the seeds embedded in the hearts of people blossom in reaction to what is happening around them.

This of course gives way to political religion, opening the way for certain groups to political influence.

A religious person is the one who exercises religious rites, worships God in the normal manner, does not contemplate or harbour enmity towards the idea of nationalism and does not consider opting for "an Islamic Nation" unless encouraged and instructed to do so by a political speech called "Islam lies the solution."

Groups falling under the influence of this slogan try to deal with various crisis by using it.

Islamist influential groups hope to transform the slogan in the next stage into one saying "Solution lies with the Islamists."

It is at this next stage that these groups attempt to seize power.

Yet, numerous religious people have not yet had their brains washed by the political groups as they still retain their normal feelings towards Nationalism.

At the same time, they are not doing harm to or opposing their own own.

It is on these people that we depend for reviving national ideology to serve as a common denominator for all Arabs. Religion and Arabism are twin factors within the Arab Nation. It is not in the interest of our nation to eradicate one in favour of the other. Otherwise we would be facing tragedies, further dismemberment and divisions, just live in the former Soviet Union.

Correction

Due to an editorial mistake, Naiwa Naijar-Kort's article "Israeli absence from Palestinian festival testifies to separate identities" (Jordan Times, May 13, 1993) should have had the last paragraph as a note reading: "The writer (Mrs. Naijar) has recently returned from Jerusalem and is currently working as a filmmaker in Amman, instead of 'Mr. Kuttal, himself a writer, has...'"

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Economy

Governors of ADB agree on need to tighten lending

ABIDJAN (R) — Governors of the African Development Bank (ADB) ended their annual meeting Thursday in broad agreement on tightening loan policy but differing on how tough restrictions should be.

The bank's Senegalese president, Babacar Ndiaye, said Wednesday that loans to defaulting and low-income countries could be reduced or halted, but the slack should be taken up by the ADB's soft-loan arm, the African Development Fund (ADF).

Bank sources say arrears at the end of 1992 were about \$356 million — 4.9 per cent of loans outstanding — and latest figures indicate that the proportion of arrears rose to over six per cent by the end of March.

At a news conference Thursday, Nigeria, the largest single ADB shareholder, said that while it accepted the principle of tighter lending no African country should be turned away by the bank.

"All categories of African countries must have access to both the concessionary and non-concessionary windows of the bank group. Anything less will be unacceptable to Nigeria," Finance Minister Oladele Oloshole said.

The ADF "should therefore complement but should not be used to supplant the objectives and programmes of its mother agency the ADB."

Bank sources said moving high-risk lending from the ADB to the ADF would protect the bank's credit standing on Western capital markets and give donors from developing countries more say in how money was disbursed.

Voting in the ADB is weighted against non-regional members while in the ADF they have equality with their regional partners.

Mr. Ndiaye has called for ADF funds to be boosted by 50 per cent in the 1994/96 replenishment period. Non-regional shareholders are expected to hold out for less but are unwilling to say how much.

"Talks on the ADF replenishment only began tomorrow and could well go into the beginning of next year, it's far too early to talk about numbers," a senior official told Reuters.

In an effort to reduce tensions between regional and non-regional members, the meeting set up a consultative committee which in addition to making recommendations on ADF funding will also debate financial and operational policy.

Non-regional governors, notably the United States and Japan, emphasised the need for African states to persevere with structural adjustment programmes and launch campaigns to reduce population growth.

Peseta devaluation meets wave of criticism in Spain

MADRID (R) — Spain's decision to devalue the peseta by eight per cent met a wave of political reprimand Friday, with opposition parties, unions and business leaders demanding the government's economic policy be jettisoned.

The devaluation was a bitter pill for a socialist government facing elections on June 6 which could see it lose power after 10 years, and for its goals of converging with its EC partners.

"This government has devalued our currency three times in eight months, and has created an unacceptable situation of economic weakness," said opposition candidate Jose Maria Aznar, of the centre-right Popular Party (P.P.).

The socialists had hoped to hold off pressure on the peseta until the elections, and the forced capitulation is likely to cost it valuable votes. But Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez said the decision was taken regardless of the electoral consequences.

He told a group of Spanish journalists the devaluation had allowed interest rates to fall and meant a point of departure for economic recovery, but few accepted his enthusiasm.

The policy of keeping high interest rates and an overvalued peseta shows the failure of an economic model that has weakened economic activity, employment and investment without correcting imbalances," the business federation CEOE said.

A senior General Workers Union official said devaluation was inevitable but would not solve

The decision to devalue on a Thursday caught markets by surprise.

Economic analysts generally agreed with Mr. Solchaga's belief that the eight per cent devaluation should be enough now to contain speculative pressure on the peseta, which early Friday firms a little from levels above 79.11 to the mark against 72.7877 before.

The adjustment, which follows a five per cent devaluation last September and one of six per cent in November, leaves the peseta's central parity in the European Exchange Rate mechanism at 79.11 to the mark against 72.7877 before.

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Economy



workers this fiscal year's protracted strike. The strike, which started in 1987, when the average pay hike was based on a sharp rise in the Japanese stock market, is the latest in a series of strikes worth 30% in 1993, making it said Bahar (3172.3 million) is

looking for new trading partners. The exchange rate (320) is an uncertain future, president of the committee of the foreign exchange first administration has set up agricultural and with the intent of Last this month, futures clearly

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Michael Jackson picks 3 awards

MONTE CARLO (AP) — Michael Jackson picked up three world music awards during a ceremony full of royal presenters. Prince Caroline awarded Luciano Pavarotti with an award for best classical artist, while Prince Albert and his sister, Princess Stephanie, honoured Jackson as best artist of his country, of the year and of his era. Tina Turner was given the lifetime achievement award and Eric Clapton was chosen as best British artist and best rock artist.

Invasion of pretty women causing a stir in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Beauty pageants are hardly alien to Mexico, where virtually every Pueblo crowns a beauty queen sometime during the year. But this year, the Miss Universe pageant, with all its glitter, has come to Mexico City, and the show has become a crowd-stopper. Everywhere the women go, they have capital residents talking. Many praise the contest, but others fear it promotes women as sex objects among Mexico's legendary machos. Pastel, pink and green buses have been darting around Mexico City for days and were spotted bearing contestants to a photo shoot at a luxury hotel. The Miss Universe pageant is the biggest beauty contest of them all, a competition for a crown, scholarship and prizes that has attracted more than 85 national beauty queens. The finals will be broadcast on May 21 to hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide. The contest is about bathing suit competitions, talent competitions and fashion competitions featuring national costumes and evening gowns. And it's something Mexicans can very well relate to. Virtually every corner in fiesta-crazy Mexico crowns a beauty queen sometime during the year, whether it's a Miss Aguascalientes or a Miss Veracruz — usually on strength of beauty, charm and poise. When more than 20 Miss Universe contestants showed up last week in one town, Zacatecas, 20,000 people appeared, strewing carnations at their feet.

U.S. reassigned 6 navy officers on Tailhook

WASHINGTON (AP) — The navy had temporarily reassigned six senior-ranking officers to shore duty so they will be "readily available" to the admiral overseeing the service's disciplinary proceedings in the Tailhook incident. In a brief statement issued at the Pentagon, the navy said the action was taken at the request of Admiral J. Paul Reason, the three-star admiral in charge of following up on the Pentagon inspector general's report that recommended discipline for up to 140 officers in connection with the event. The six officers were not identified and the statement warned that the action does not necessarily indicate that any particular disciplinary action would take place against them. The inspection general's report, issued last month, found that 83 women and seven men were sexually assaulted at the 1991 Tailhook Aviators Convention in Las Vegas, and that dozens of officers in attempts to cover up their activities. The report also found a "long-term failure of leadership" had helped produce the atmosphere of "debauchery" at the convention. The Tailhook Organisation is named after the hook on the back of planes which enables them to land on aircraft carriers.

Man convicted in condom rape trial

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A man who claimed a woman's request that he wear a condom demonstrated her consent was convicted of raping the woman, drawing cheers in the courtroom. The eight-woman, four-man jury deliberated about two hours before returning the verdict against Joel Valdez, 28. During the three-day trial, Valdez argued that the woman agreed to have sex because she had asked him to use a condom. "She told me to do her favour. She told me to wear a condom, so I did," Valdez testified. "We were making love after that." But in sometimes tearful testimony, the 26-year-old woman said she pleaded with her knife-wielding attacker to wear a condom to protect her from AIDS. "I knew there wasn't much I could do to prevent what was going to happen," she said. "I thought maybe I could protect myself from dying from AIDS." Travis County Grand Jury in September declined to indict Mr. Valdez, sparking community protests from women's groups and the victim, who denied her request for a condom meant she consented to sex. A second grand jury indicted Mr. Valdez in October. Several women spectators in the courtroom cheered when the verdict was read. The victim, who also watched the verdict being read, cried. Mr. Valdez showed no emotion.

Serb leaders meet in Belgrade as fighting rages around Brcko

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Serb leaders began a special meeting in Belgrade Friday to persuade the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen peace plan, as a new Serb offensive on Brcko in northern Bosnia posed a grave threat to the latest fragile ceasefire.

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata meanwhile denounced "serious human rights violations" against Muslims in Croatian-controlled Bosnian zones, according to UNHCR spokesman who said Croat forces were holding 2,000 people near Mostar in the south.

Major Barry Frewer, spokesman for the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Sarajevo, Friday described the Serb offensive on Brcko as an "extremely serious" violation.

He said fighting was continuing around Lipovac and southeast of Brcko, and added that UNPROFOR had "put forward a strong protest."

In Belgrade a special joint meeting of the parliaments of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro and Serb officials from Bosnia and Croatia opened at midday after a two-hour delay.

In a snub to Belgrade, the self-styled Bosnian Serb parliament has refused to participate in the meeting, and plans to go ahead with a referendum this weekend on the Vance-Owen plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

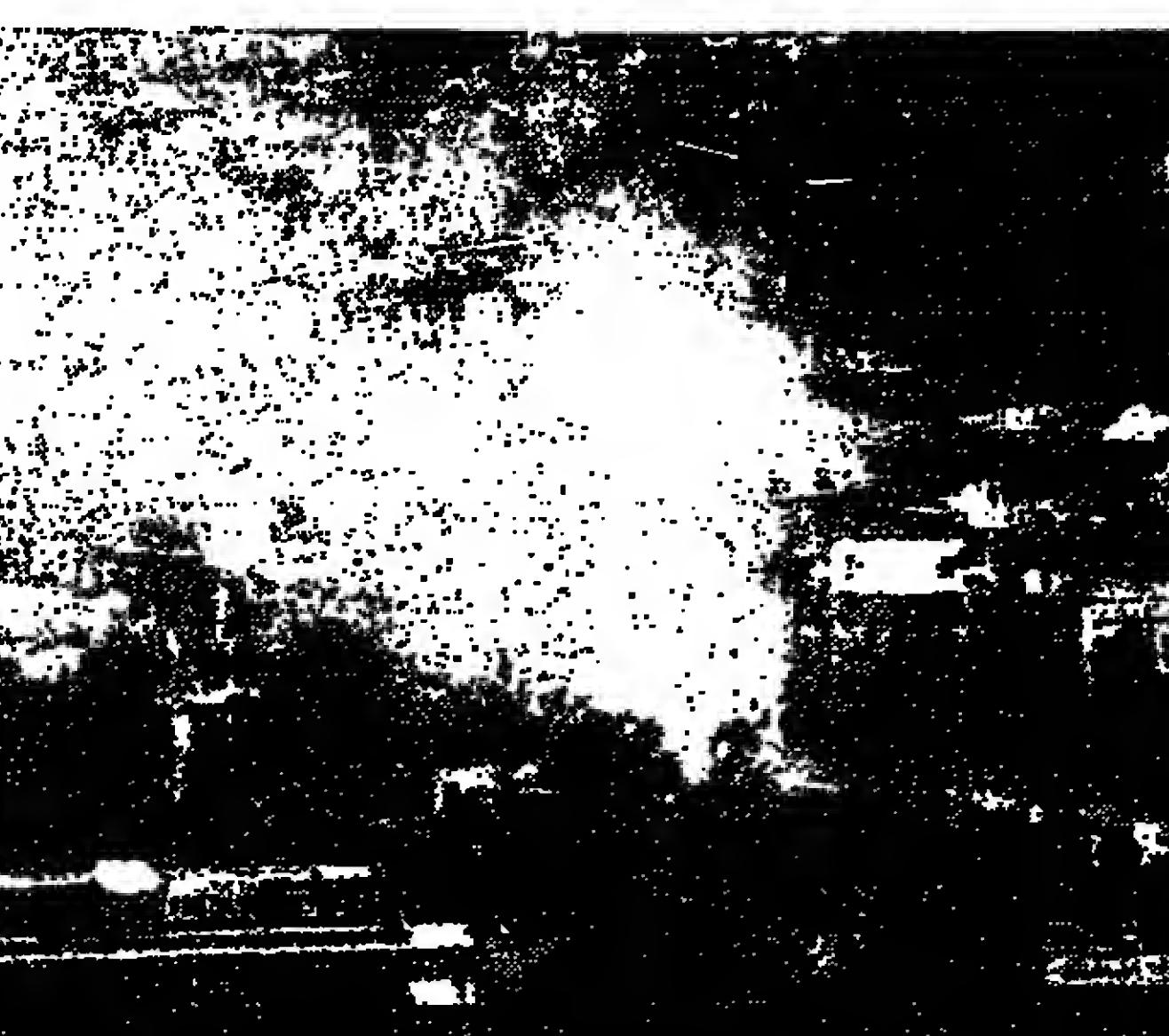
Deputies from the Croatian Serbs' "parliament" also refused to attend.

Only 370 deputies out of a predicted total of more than 700 are attending the meeting, which is merely consultative.

The U.N. has alerted to the latest Serb attack on the Brcko area early Thursday by Croatian Defence Council (HVO) forces in the north, according to Maj. Frewer who described the battle as "an offensive."

"I don't know from where it came. I don't know what precipitated it. We do know that there has been fighting in the past few days up there. We do know that they are trying to secure that northern corridor, but I can't say any more about their intentions," Maj. Frewer said.

U.N. military observers based in Tuzla were sent to the Brcko



Smoke billows from several buildings in the centre of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFP photo)

area and reported that the Serb attackers were using artillery, mortars and multiple rocket launchers. But they could not confirm Bosnian Muslim reports that the Serbs were using tanks.

The Serb aim would be to widen a corridor across northern Bosnia-Herzegovina linking the Serb-controlled area of Banja Luka, in the northwest, with Serbia.

Sarajevo Radio said Serb forces launched a new infantry and artillery attack in the Brcko area early Friday, and that six were killed and 17 wounded on the Bosnian Muslim side since Thursday.

Separate clashes between Bosnian Croat and Muslim forces continued overnight and early Friday in the southern town of Mostar, but "at a reduced level," UNPROFOR reported.

A company of about 100 Spanish U.N. troops moved into the town Thursday to help nail down a ceasefire negotiated by political leaders Monday, a day after Maj. Frewer who described the battle as "an offensive."

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Maj. Frewer said Friday each time the Spanish troops tried to approach the front line their vehicles were shot at. "We have already lost 40 tyres," he said. Sarajevo Radio said the com-

mander of the Muslim-led Bosnian government forces, General Sefer Halilovic, went to Medjugorje south of Mostar in Croat-held territory Friday to hold talks with local Croat commanders.

In Paris, Bosnian Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic strongly criticised European Community policy on Bosnia.

"It's not neutrality but complicity," he said.

Speaking after talks with French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, Mr. Silajdzic said 13 months of diplomatic activity had "resulted mostly in destruction and death in Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Unfortunately the EC is now helping this totalitarian fascist system in Belgrade to either kill or expel," he added.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel urged Croatian President Franjo Tudjman Friday to rein in Croat forces attacking Muslims in Bosnia or risk jeopardising Western support for his country.

Mr. Kinkel met Mr. Tudjman on behalf of the 12-member European Community after it threatened Croatia — which seeks closer ties with the EC — with punitive action unless Bosnian Croat aggression ceased.

Zagreb has denied responsibility

Danish polls predict Maastricht 'yes'

COPENHAGEN (R) — Two Danish opinion polls Friday reconfirmed a big "yes" lead ahead of the May 18 referendum on the European Community's (EC) Maastricht Treaty.

A Gallup poll showed the "yes" lead widening, while a Greens institute poll indicated the race was tightening in the run-up to Tuesday's vote on the landmark treaty on European political, economic and monetary union.

Danes rejected the treaty by a tiny 50.7-49.3 per cent majority last June, plunging the EC into turmoil. They have since won exemptions from key treaty aims including a common currency, joint defence policies and common citizenship rules.

The Gallup poll, in the daily Berlingske Tidende, showed that 50 per cent of voters would vote "yes" Tuesday and that 32 per

cent would say "no" — against a 49.35 per cent lead on Thursday. Others were undecided or planning not to vote.

But the Greens poll in the financial daily Boersen showed that the "yes" side had slid to 50 per cent from 53 in a poll a week ago and that the "no" had strengthened to 39 per cent from 34.

It said that voters in all areas of Denmark would vote "yes" except for the northern part of the Jutland peninsula.

Despite substantial opposition among voters, seven of the eight parties in parliament, with 91 per cent of the votes at the last elections, want Danes to say "yes" to help revive economic growth and to avoid isolation for Denmark.

Opponents say the treaty is undemocratic and that the views of Denmark's 5.2 million citizens

will be drowned in a union of 340 million EC citizens dominated by Germany and France.

"One result is certain on May 18. It will show that voters are out of step with politicians," said Hans Joergen Nielsen, an assistant professor of political science at Copenhagen University.

Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen says he will not call a new election if the result is a "no."

One Fich, the leader of the "yes" campaign for Mr. Rasmussen's Social Democratic Party, warned supporters against complacency despite the polls.

"I'm confident, but still we will work hard because I'm sure that during the weekend there will be surprises, like a mistake by somebody or new secret documents," he told Reuters. "You never know before the votes are counted."

U.S. declares end of Star Wars era

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Les Aspin has declared the end of the Star Wars era, saying former President Ronald Reagan's vision of a space-based anti-missile shield is no longer needed.

The restructuring of the U.S. anti-missile research programme will abandon exotic projects such as using X-ray lasers for a space barrier against incoming missiles in favour of more mundane ground-based technology.

"We have a real need for ballistic missile defence, but not the massive programme of space-based weapons that Ronald Reagan envisioned," Mr. Aspin told a news conference.

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) — proposed by Mr. Reagan in March 1983 and dubbed "Star Wars" after the popu-

lar film — will be renamed Ballistic Missile Defence Organisation, Mr. Aspin said.

The defence secretary will ask Congress for \$3.8 billion for the programme in 1994, a \$2.5-billion reduction from the proposal by former President George Bush.

Some \$30 billion has been spent on the programme over the last decade, but its importance diminished and its emphasis has already been changed as a result of the end of the cold war and the breakup of the former Soviet Union.

"These changes are possible because of the end of a battle that had raged in Washington for over a decade over the best way to avoid nuclear war," said Mr. Aspin. "The fate of Star Wars was sealed by the collapse of the Soviet Union."

Mr. Aspin said the main aim of the new programme would be to develop a new generation of weapons capable of shooting down short-range ballistic missiles — with a range of 1,000 to 2,000 kilometres — such as the Scud.

A secondary priority will be technology for shooting down long-range ballistic missiles. Mr. Aspin said the technology for this would be ground-based, but did not indicate whether space sensors would be used.

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The Daily Express for its part reported that the now estranged Prince and Princess of Wales had their telephone conversations bugged by the security services after they started courting 12 years ago.

The Sun Friday reported that the Duke and Duchess of York told close friends: "We know we have been bugged."

The conversation has allegedly been taped when Prince Andrew and his wife Sarah Ferguson, com-

monly known as "Fergie," were going through a rough patch in their six-year marriage.

The transcript of a telephone call, drawn from a forthcoming novel by a Sun photographer, shows the duchess keen to take a break to visit her mother in Argentina.

The Daily Mirror for its part reported that the now estranged Prince and Princess of Wales had their telephone conversations bugged by the security services after they started courting 12 years ago.

In one taped call, made before the couple wed in 1981, they joke about their future. Prince Charles suggests that in a few years' time Princess Diana might be glad to

Yeltsin looks to former Soviet neighbours for political allies

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin hinted Friday for new political allies among Russia's ex-Soviet neighbours as his battle to crush a hostile conservative legislature at home moves into a decisive phase.

On Friday morning, he held

Kremlin talks with Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze on

resolving a bloody separatist conflict in the west Georgian region of Abkhazia. Georgia accuses Russia of helping the separatists.

In the afternoon, he took part in a summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The 10 leaders will discuss Mr. Yeltsin's March plan to radically revamp the CIS and halt its growth.

But a Ukrainian delegate suggested the most pressing reason for the summit, unexpectedly moved forward two weeks from its scheduled end-of-May date, was to give Mr. Yeltsin public backing from neighbours before a new round of his domestic battle.

Both Mr. Shevardnadze and Abkhazian rebel leader Vladislav Ardzinba have said they expected little from the Georgian talks. Mr. Ardzinba Thursday rejected Mr. Shevardnadze's new proposal for Ukrainian peacekeepers to patrol the rebel region.

Several hundred people have been killed in almost nine months of fighting since Abkhazian separatists, with support from Russian irregulars, launched a struggle for more autonomy.

But the talks will serve an important purpose for Mr. Yeltsin. They will shed flattering light on the image he wants to present

as a moderate peacemaker surrounded by aggressive conservatives.

Mr. Shevardnadze has said repeatedly he believes it is not Mr. Yeltsin, but Russian conservatives nostalgic for Soviet ways, who are helping the Abkhazian rebels on territory which is no longer theirs.

Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Shevardnadze agreed Friday to call for a ceasefire in Abkhazia from May 20.

Local news agencies quoted Mr. Shevardnadze as telling reporters after the Kremlin talks that the ceasefire would be followed by the withdrawal of heavy military equipment from the conflict zone and a ban on all flights in the region.

The two governments planned to sign a major treaty in mid-June including a package of bilateral agreements, Mr. Shevardnadze was quoted as saying.

He and other leaders of the former Soviet republics strongly backed Mr. Yeltsin in Russia's April 25 referendum campaign.

At home, Mr. Yeltsin is using his referendum win to move in for the kill against conservatives who have blocked the radical economic reforms he is trying to bring.

Russia's parliament moved to sign the constitutional court to rule on whether Mr. Yeltsin was breaking the law in his current attempt to bypass the legislature and bring in a new constitution.

Mr. Yeltsin got a boost from a different quarter when the president of powerful Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, Thursday threw his support behind the Russian leader's reform plan for a

leaders on June 5, to draft and perhaps adopt a new constitution without the lawmakers — whose job it is under the present constitution.

Mr. Ryabov has been a key ally of Mr. Khasbulatov through a long power struggle between the parliamentary chairman and the president.

Mr. Khasbulatov tried to interrupt Mr. Ryabov several times during his short address.

"It is dangerous for the parliament to be dragged into anti-constitutional structures," Mr. Khasbulatov said at one point in a reference to the assembly, which Mr. Yeltsin is convening on June 5 to draft and, perhaps, to endorse a constitution.

Mr. Khasbulatov's intervention brought another long-time opponent of Mr. Yeltsin's economic reforms, Venyamin Sokolov, to his feet in Mr. Ryabov's support.

"I would ask the chairman not to exert pressure on deputies," he said.

The Russian parliament decided Friday to ask the constitutional court to rule on the legality of President Yeltsin's attempt to bypass the legislature in bringing in a new constitution.

Russian Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi Friday said President Yeltsin's camp was trying to sign him to political oblivion, but he would not give up the fight against them.

Mr. Rutskoi, whom Mr. Yeltsin has stripped of his main posts, his official Mercedes limousine and most of his staff and bodyguards, told the opposition daily Pravda he was spurred by Mr. Yeltsin soon after victory over a hardline coup in August 1991.

Italians must fight mafia infiltration, Ciampi says

ROME (Agencies) — Mafia infiltration of the economy is undermining Italy and must be attacked by business leaders and civil servants. Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi said Friday, launching a campaign against organised crime.

He called on leaders in the Italian economy, and people in the public administration, to fight against mafia infiltration of the economic and financial system.

"The infiltration of organised crime" throughout the economy "is undermining international confidence in our country," he said.

The conference had been organised by the anti-mafia commission of parliament in memory of Judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino one year after they were murdered by the

2nd Division Basketball Championship First round ends today

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The first round of the 1993 Second Division Basketball Championship, organised by the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF), comes to an end Saturday when former First Division teams, Homentmen and Al Abbasi, fight it out in a much awaited match by fans of both teams.

Nine teams are competing in the championship which is being played on a two-round basis. The top four teams will play a title-deciding second round at the Sports Palace Court starting Monday.

This season only the first place winner will be promoted to the First Division in 1994, while the last two teams in the overall standings — Al Mafrag and Anjarah — will be relegated to the Third Division.

Homentmen and Abbasi have already qualified for the second round after maintaining unbeaten records until now. Gazzet Hashem and Yarmouk Amman also qualified.

Al Karak were in competitive form and gave Al Abbasi a hard time before the latter scored a 4-point victory of 68-64. However they later seemed

to lose their momentum when Abu Nusair, a new team in the competition, scored a surprising victory defeating Al Karak at their home court 72-65. Abu Nusair lost hope of securing a second round qualifying berth after losing to Gazzet Hashem 48-47.

The Abbasi-Homentmen match, which was due to be played Monday May 10, had been postponed after Al Abbasi objected to the outmoded and tilted, improper basketball board and ring at the JBF court.

Both Homentmen and Al

STANDINGS

	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Homentmen	7	7	—	550	251	14
Abbasi	7	7	—	455	264	14
Gazzet Hashem	8	6	2	490	405	14
Yarmouk Amman	8	4	4	457	428	12
Abu Nusair	8	4	4	478	439	12
Karak	8	3	5	525	427	11
Husun	8	2	6	304	523	10
Mafrag*	8	1	7	305	584	9
Anjarah*	8	1	7	410	502	8

* Homentmen-Abbasi have a postponed match

* Relegated to third division



Bahrain striker Khamis Eid (right) and Lebanese defender Ibrahim Hossi battle for the ball during their World Cup qualifying match (AFP photo)

Lebanon fail to score win; South Korea keep lead

BEIRUT (R) — Winless Lebanon and Bahrain battled to a goalless draw in their Group D match in Beirut to leave both well behind South Korea and Hong Kong, in their World Cup qualifying matches in Beirut.

Bahrain had most of the ball during the match but failed to transform their superiority into goals and had very few clear-cut chances.

Lebanon, urged on by a partisan crowd of 13,000 relied on counter-attacks and strikes Fadi Allouch and Wael Nazha both missed chances.

Lebanon have now completed their group matches and the first leg will be completed Saturday with a top-of-the-table clash between South Korea and Hong Kong while Bahrain play India.

Lebanon's coach Berjaoui said he was not disappointed his team had not won a single game on home soil but added: "We still hope to improve in the second round of matches in South Korea next month."

Mansell gets to grips with Indianapolis

INDIANAPOLIS (AFP) — Formula One World Champion Nigel Mansell overcame his amazement and continued to improve Thursday on his second day of driving at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The Englishman clocked 224.372 mph (361.081 km/h) on his best lap on the 2.5 mile (4 km) oval, and had several laps above 220 mph.

Mansell, who jumped to IndyCar racing this season and promptly won his first race, admitted the circuit was intimidating.

"I've tried to come with an open mind to Indianapolis," he said. "It's very difficult because even from the air at about 5,000 feet when you fly about five miles away, you can see it."

"It is a very daunting, and, in your language, a very awesome place," he told American journalists asking his impression of the track.

"The facility here, I've never seen anything like it. I think all the Englishmen here, all the European press which have come across, will agree with me that there's nothing as mighty as it in the world," he said.

"The thing that goes through your mind at this circuit is to pay attention, to pay very serious attention," he added. "I've never been used to entering corners at these kinds of speeds anywhere. The quickest corner we'll ever have in Grand Prix racing is 190 (mph — 306 km/h)."

The facility shifts to the Richfield Coliseum for games Saturday and Monday. If a fifth is needed, the series would return to Chicago stadium next Wednesday night.

B.J. Armstrong added 14 points for the Bulls.

The Cavaliers were led by Larry Nance with 16, Craig Ehlo had 15 and Mark Price 13.

Suns 109, Spurs 103

Charles Barkley's personal shoot-around paid off in Phoenix.

After hitting 5 of 21 shots in the first game of the San Antonio-Western Conference semifinal, Barkley spent 20 minutes on the Suns' practice court.

The results of the extra work showed Thursday night. He made 12 of 18 shots in a 35-point performance which sparked a 109-103 victory and sent the Suns to San Antonio with a 2-0 lead in the best-of-7 series.

Barkley sat out the first 8½ minutes of the fourth quarter, and the Suns opened a 94-78 lead without him.

Al Maidan Basketball Tournament Ahli defeat Orthodoxi 90-71 to clinch title

By Aleen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's Al Ahli Friday clinched Al Maidan basketball tournament's trophy with an impressive 90-71 win over all-time rivals Al Orthodoxi.

The match, played at the Sports Palace court and attended by Minister of Youth Saleh Isheidat and around 3,000 basketball fans, was a clear indicator that Al Ahli are well on their way to capturing the Jordanian basketball championship title which, for the past decade, has been monopolised by Al Orthodoxi.

Al Orthodoxi only led at 9-8 in the first minutes of the match. From then on, Al Ahli tightened their defence, secured defensive rebounding and gradually began to expand the gap 17-11 and 23-13. Two consecutive three-pointers by Yousef Zaghloul gave Al Ahli a 29-20 lead.

Al Orthodoxi scored through Amjad Al Tambar and Murad Barakat but could not catch up, as another three-pointer by Naser Bushnaq and a score by Walid Badran ended the first half 40-29.

Al Ahli, whose coach has effectively changed their style and which depends mainly on a



Al Ahli's three-pointer expert Marwan Ma'touq

rotating lineup of players, continued to score by Marwan Ma'touq and Badran who gave their team a 49-38 lead before teammate Mohammad Al Shammal scored six consecutive

points.

Al Orthodoxi, mainly depending on the Barakat brothers, Murad and Hisham, seemed helpless as their coach and captain Murad Barakat tried to guide his team and abort his opponents' schemes. Ziad Al Nabulsi and Tambar scored as Al Ahli still led 60-51 with 11 minutes remaining.

Meanwhile, Al Orthodoxi's players were hampered by many fouls, which in their case was a heavy disadvantage, as the team seemed to lack effective substitutes and primarily depended on the experience of their elder players.

Al Ahli intercepted many loose balls and converted them to fast attacks which secured their win by expanding the lead from 68-57 to 78-57 after a three-pointer by Zaghloul with five minutes remaining.

At Orthodoxi scored by Tambar, Nabulsi and Jan Sahlil and tried to apply a full-court defence. But it was already too late, as Al Ahli, supported by hundreds of chanting fans, celebrated their win and continued to score by Murqus and Ma'touq, the three-point star of Al Ahli and the tournament.

Al Ahli led 90-69 before, a last minute score by Al Orthodoxi ended the match 90-71.

Bulls crush Cavaliers

CHICAGO (AP) — Horace Grant scored 20 points and Scottie Pippen 19 as Michael Jordan, nursing an injured wrist, turned things over to his "supporting cast" Thursday night in the Chicago Bulls' 104-85 victory over the visiting Cleveland Cavaliers.

Jordan, who shot his last free throw of the third period left-handed and sat out the fourth quarter because of a slightly sprained right wrist, had 18 points as the Bulls took a 2-0 lead in a best-of-7 Eastern Conference playoff series.

The scene shifts to the Richfield Coliseum for games Saturday and Monday. If a fifth is needed, the series would return to Chicago stadium next Wednesday night.

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President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch waves to the media as he arrived at Sydney Airport Friday. Samaranch will inspect Sydney's facilities in its bid to host the Olympic Games in the year 2000 (AFP photo)

IOC praises Sydney's 2000 Olympic bid

SYDNEY (AP) — IOC President

Juan Antonio Samaranch began a three-day visit to Sydney Friday acknowledging that its bid to host the 2000 Olympics games may be as well as those under construction.

Samaranch will view the proposed main site of the games by helicopter.

The visit follows a similar tour by Samaranch in Beijing, which is regarded as Sydney's bid organizer as its main rival.

Sydney bid chief Fred McGeoch said Samaranch's visit, which ends Sunday, will be "key," compared with the political and ceremony he received in China.

"But after the start, maybe (one of them) will be faster than the others. And I think that the Sydney bid could be, and will be, very, very fast."

His tour of Australia's oldest

and most populous city will include meeting Prime Minister Paul Keating Saturday. He will also inspect existing facilities as well as those under construction.

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His tour of Australia's oldest

CIS wants 'economic union'

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Commonwealth leaders signed a declaration Friday stating support for an "economic union" among the former Soviet republics, taking a step towards closer cooperation after a year of squabbling.

Nine of the 10 leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) signed the declaration at the end of a one-day summit meeting in Moscow. The only member abstaining was Turkmenistan, which has balked at the idea.

"These are serious questions which concern the sovereignty of all nations," Russian President Boris Yeltsin told the leaders during a speech. "But if (you're) serious about economic integration, all this is necessary."

Although the economic union won support of most CIS leaders, it still could be ignored or gutted in the coming months, as other agreements have been. The declaration Friday only states an "intention" to set up an economic union and orders officials to draw up documents by July.

Mr. Yeltsin said economic union would require "serious commitments from member states.

"Economic union is unthinkable without an agreed strategy of economic reforms, without coordinating economic policy. Russia is ready to create a currency union as an indivisible part of an economic union," he said.

Mr. Yeltsin said work should be speeded up to create an interstate bank, as agreed at an earlier summit, and called for the setting up of a customs union. The latter would require coordinated price policies between member states.

It was not immediately clear what other leaders thought of these proposals. Effective cooperation between the 10 former Soviet republics that make up the CIS has been hampered since its inception in 1991 constant squabbling over policy.

Nonetheless, the document was the most hopeful sign in months for the future of the Commonwealth, which has been hobbled by infighting and empty promises since it was founded in December 1991 as the successor to the Soviet Union.

Russia's blueprints for the economic union included unified customs agencies, a banking union to organise a joint monetary system and oversee financial and credit

policy, a foreign trade union and steps to coordinate national legislations.

Mr. Yeltsin told his counterparts Friday that each member of the economic union would have to implement a concrete privatisation plan. He said members also would have to settle debts to Russia.

Earlier Friday, the Russian president acknowledged concerns about the Commonwealth's future. But he argued that "almost all (Commonwealth) countries now support closer forms of economy, cooperation and economic union."

Mr. Yeltsin claimed the realisation was "a kind of turning point in the life of our Commonwealth."

Mr. Yeltsin said Commonwealth members must be ready to create "a unified economic space, unified economic norms and coordination of our actions," including a stronger collective security system.

"An economic union in the modern sense of the word is impossible without close cooperation in other fields," Mr. Yeltsin said.



HOSTAGE DRAMA: A young boy is carried by his grandfather after being released by a hooded gunman who took some 30 children hostage at a kindergarten in the western Paris suburb of Nemilly-sur-Seine Thursday. The man, who was demanding 100 million French francs (\$18.5 million) as ransom, released 11 children by sundown Friday. The stand-off was continuing late Friday. (AFP photo)

Algeria will return to democracy — minister

By Saad Silawi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Algerian Minister of National Education Ahmad Jabbar has reaffirmed his government's intention to restore democratic life in the country.

In an interview with the Jordan Times and Al Ra'i, Mr. Jabbar noted that Algerian Head of State Ali Kafi had announced a series of political measures on the road of restoring democracy.

The measures include the broadening of the national consultative council and a public referendum on the form of government in preparation for the gradual restoration of democratic life," Mr. Jabbar said.

The minister stressed that the situation in Algeria was "improving on all fronts, particularly on the security front."

"Dialogue between the government and the Algerian political parties, including the opposition, has succeeded in its initial stage," he said, voicing hope that the second round of dialogue will be launched in the next two weeks.

The dialogue followed a wave of violence which erupted in 1992 in different parts of Algeria after the cancellation of the legislative elections and the announcement by the dominant Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which maintains close relations with Iran, that it was planning to change the country's constitution.

This argument, according to some analysts, is rendered questionable by the many attempts by the Brotherhood to amend laws in accordance with Islamic Sharia, such as amending the youth law to segregate sexes at sports clubs, the push for segregating schools and banning alcohol, among other things.

Even though the Brotherhood believed that there is a need for changing some provisions in the Election Law to ensure fair representation of all sectors of society, Dr. Sa'di said, the mechanism of change

should be constitutional. That, he added, could only be done through a permanent law that would be endorsed by Parliament. Changing the law through a temporary law would be considered unconstitutional by the Brotherhood.

"Any decision to change the law outside of Parliament would be a blow to the whole democratic process, a naked aggression on the House," Dr. Sa'di insisted.

"There are faults in the (Election) Law and we want to address them. But that should not be done through the issuance of a temporary law."

A mechanism for change that seems to be winning

Balhaj, both extremist fundamentalists who maintain close relations with Iran.

The chain of events forced President Chadli Benjedid to resign his post, thus giving the army and the then Prime Minister Sayed Ahmad Ghazali a justification to accuse him of collaborating with the Islamists and to assume power in the country.

President Benjedid was placed under house arrest in his home town of Wahran, the second biggest city in Algeria. One of the revolution's veteran leaders, Ahmad Boudiaf, who was exiled for 25 years because of his liberal ideas, was called to assume power. But Mr. Boudiaf was assassinated by one of his bodyguards last year.

The conference recommended that more attention be paid to the African countries and to the Islamic states of Asia, which together form the "strategic depth" of the entire Arab Nation.

The conference stressed that the Palestine question was the crux of conflict in the Middle East, and said American policy towards the Palestine question was still based on the traditional concept of domination.

The conference noted with regret the failure of the United Nations Security Council to implement its Resolution 799 on the Palestinian expellees stranded in Lebanon and other resolutions on the Palestine question.

The final communiqué of the conference discussed the latest developments of the Middle East peace process and noted that the Arab-Israeli talks underway deal only with the Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and completely ignores the Arab territory of Palestine occupied in 1948.

According to the communiqué, the adoption of Security Council Resolution 242 as a basis for Arab-Israeli talks, "in isolation of international resolutions on the issue," has made the peace process "baseless." It also asserted that the talks were now taking place outside the framework of the United Nations and thus they had no legally binding authority.

The communiqué criticised the Arabs for failing to crystallise a pan-Arab position.

The conference said a proposal for a new Middle East order had been carefully planned by Western and American research institutions which give Zionist Jews a special role to play in formulating an integrated project covering financial, economic, population, environmental, educational and security aspects.

"The proposed order has been broadened to include international organisations.

tionally Central Asian countries with a view to achieving a Western strategy aimed at placing heavier financial burdens on Arab financial institutions," it said.

The conference called on all Arab countries to resist this project and condemned the steps by some Arab countries to study the project and pave the ground for its implementation.

The conference called on all Arab intellectuals to "expose" the project and to assist Arab countries to devise the right means to counter it.

On democratisation and human rights, the conference noted the grave violations of human rights and public freedom in the Arab World and called for putting an end to such violations.

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The choices for electoral reform

(Continued from page 1)

society to be represented in the House and is not aiming for imposing its political programme on the country through the House.

"The application of Islamic Sharia cannot be implemented through the House or through the government. It requires a comprehensive and gradual social change that will take time to occur," he said.

"When that process is completed, society will change itself by itself and adopt the tenets of Islam."

Chief Lebanese negotiator Soheil Chamas told a news conference: "If we're serious about this peace process we think a testing ground could be Lebanon."

"An Israeli action and the action of withdrawal first would augur well," he said.

Israel and Lebanon also appear to have reached an impasse, having presented each other with documents but failing to resolve their essential difference: Lebanon wants Israel to withdraw unconditionally from a region of southern Lebanon it has held since 1982. Israel wants to keep its soldiers there until it can work out an arrangement with Leba-

non that would ensure the area is not used by guerrillas to launch the attacks against its northern border.

Lebanon suggested Thursday that if Israel was serious about a Middle East settlement based on "land for peace," it could make a partial withdrawal from South Lebanon.

With the talks now adjourned, Dr. Ashrawi mixed criticism of the United States and of Israel at a news conference in which she described the talks as "a let-down." She said Arab foreign ministers would decide soon whether to continue the negotiations, which were begun in October 1991.

The talks did not produce agreement on limited self-rule for the Palestinians who live on the Israeli-held West Bank and in Gaza. Nor did Israel and three Arab states, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, come to terms over their conflicts.

The round was marked by an attempt by the State Department to reconcile differences between Israel and the Palestinians on a "statement of principles" to govern future negotiations.

The Palestinians did not show up for the session Wednesday night. "It was sprung on us a bit late," Dr. Ashrawi said.

favour with the majority of Jordan's political groups is the formation of a special committee representing all shades of Jordan's political spectrum and entrusting it with the process.

But the Brotherhood, says Dr. Sa'di, rejects this mechanism because there will be questions on who decides on its membership and guarantees that all groups are fairly represented in it.

Only through the House would electoral reform be accepted by the Brotherhood, he continued.

"Despite the shortcomings of the Lower House, it is the most suitable place for discussing the change."

Jordan reports no progress

(Continued from page 1)

"We are not interested in the five-word formula, we are interested in the five-line elaboration of what it is that enters into the Syrian definition of peace," he said.

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Speculators refuse to give up hopes on Iraqi 'Swiss' notes

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Speculators are continuing to buy up invalidated Iraqi currency in the Jordanian market with hopes that the door has not been fully slammed against realising good profits.

Dealers said the buyers were betting on their connections either in Baghdad or in Kurdish-controlled territory in northern Iraq to convert the 25-dinar Iraqi "Swiss notes," which were withdrawn from circulation by the Iraqi government last week.

At least 25 million Iraqi dinars in the Swiss notes changed hands in the Jordanian market at around 475 to every 100,000 Iraqi dinars since Monday, the deadline set by Baghdad for the exchange of the currency in state-run banks within the country, market sources said.

A six-day border closure supported by increased frontier patrols to check smuggling had deprived speculators of the chance to take advantage of the exchange arrangement.

By all estimates, Jordanians held between two and five per cent of the "Swiss" notes in circulation — believed to have been of a total volume of 25 billion Iraqi dinars, with the bulk of it in the hands of dealers and governments in the Gulf states.

Apparently some speculators in Jordan are hoping that they could use their connections with high places in Iraq to help them exchange the Swiss notes and hence the buying spree since Monday," said a dealer, who preferred anonymity.

"At least that is what is being said in town, although no one seems to know anything more than that," the dealer said.

Suggestions in the market that the Iraqi embassy in Amman was involved in the operation were flatly denied by the mission.

"At no point in time was the embassy buying Iraqi currency or cooperating with anyone who did," said a senior official at the embassy in exchange for anonymity. "It is not our business to do so."

The Iraqi government has been cool to a Jordanian request that Jordanians be compensated for their losses caused by the withdrawal of

They said the notes with the Saddam photos could be the focus of those who hope to use their influence in Baghdad to get compensation, while the bulk which carry the photo of Hosni Mubarak could be destined for northern Iraqi territory under the control of rebel Kurds.

"Some speculators are hoping to move the bills to the Kurds with hopes that they could be compensated by the U.N.," said a dealer at a commercial bank which does not include Iraqi dinars in its dealings but keeps a close watch on market movements.

Excluded in last week's Iraqi exchange arrangement for the currency was the rebel-controlled northern zone, where only the "Swiss" notes were in circulation since the separatist Kurds in the area refused to use the "Swiss" notes printed by the Iraqi government during and after the Gulf crisis which was sparked by the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Several problems face speculators in Jordan who might be hoping to get their hoard of "Swiss" notes to northern Iraq to add to the Kurds' holdings expecting U.N. compensation — that is, if they get cooperation from the Kurds, who have reportedly already turned away Iranians appearing at their doorstep with truckloads of "Swiss" notes last week.

But the first hurdle is to get the currency out of Jordan with some form of compensation.

tion for the invalidated banknotes.

"The question remains open," said a moneychanger. "It all depends on how the Central Bank of Jordan will look at the issue: Whether it will grant permission for the currency to be taken out of Jordan."

No CBJ official was immediately available for comment.

Dr. Fanek, the economist, said the idea was plausible, but pointed out that the flow of "Swiss" notes to the Kurds would not be limited to the sources in Jordan.

"Billions of the currency will find their way to the north of Iraq through Turkey from the Gulf speculators, flooding the market and creating chaos in inflation," he said.

Meanwhile, it is business as usual for Iraq's "askari" notes were haphazardly printed, with little uniformity among those notes which was printed at different stages in the past two years, and as such it was difficult to identify forgeries.

"In fact some dealers automatically reject better-printed notes saying such bills could not possibly be produced by the Iraqi government," said one expert.

The "askari" bills, printed by the Iraqi armed forces (hence the name) "pay government salaries and finance reconstruction after the Gulf war, were shunned by many in Jordan prior to the withdrawal of the "Swiss" notes, since they believed that these would be the first to be cancelled in a

Fighting rages in Kabul

KABUL (Agencies) — Afghan